

**LEADERSHIP COUNCIL OF AGING ORGANIZATIONS
SOLUTIONS FORUM
MAY 17, 2005**

Resolution on Supplemental Security Income

Whereas the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides basic safety net protection for 7 million low-income aged, blind, and disabled adults and children with few resources (Social Security Administration, 2005); and

Whereas the eligibility requirements have not been updated for several years, making it less effective in alleviating poverty; and

Whereas the federal benefit rate for an individual in 2005 is \$579, which is 27.4 percent below the official poverty level (Federal Register); and

Whereas the general income exclusion of \$20 per month and the earned income exclusion of \$65 per month have not increased since 1972 and the resource limits have not been updated since 1989; and

Whereas approximately 54 percent of SSI beneficiaries have no other source of income besides their SSI benefits (Catholic University); and

Whereas only 1.4 percent of SSI recipients aged 65 and older earn any other income (Social Security Bulletin, 2004); and

Whereas approximately 850,000 persons age 65 and older receive SSI only and no Social Security benefits (Social Security Administration, 2005); and

Whereas many legal immigrants eligible for SSI have been harmed by the 1996 welfare reform law (Catholic University); and

Whereas administration of the program is complex and needs simplification and increased outreach (Catholic University); and

Whereas only 6 in 10 of all seniors eligible for SSI are currently receiving benefits (Catholic University); and

Whereas a panel of experts in 1992 recommended important improvements to the program but little action has been taken to implement those suggested improvements (SSA/SSI Modernization Project, 1992);

Therefore, Be It Resolved by the 2005 White House Conference on Aging to support policies that:

Modernize the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program by implementing the following recommendations:

- Increase the federal benefit standard to at least 120 percent of the poverty level;
- Discontinue counting in-kind support and maintenance as income;
- Increase the general income and earned income exclusions;
- Increase the assets/resources limits and index increases to inflation;
- Restore SSI benefits to all immigrants whose status would have entitled them to benefits prior to the 1996 welfare reform law;
- Develop and fund an effective outreach program; and
- Increase Social Security Administration staffing to administer the current program more effectively and to make the proposed improvements.

References

Catholic University of America. International Center on Global Aging. Discussion Paper on the Supplemental Security Income Program. December 1, 2004.

Federal Register. 69 Fed. Reg. 62497 (Oct. 26, 2004).

Social Security Administration. Supplemental Security Income Modernization Project: Final Report by the Experts. August 1992.

Social Security Administration. Supplemental Security Income recipients, March 2005. Monthly Statistical Snapshot.

Social Security Bulletin. Annual Statistical Supplement, 2004. Table 7.D1.